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20 April 1965

NSC BRIEFING

THE SITUATION IN SAIGON

- I. Armed outbreaks in Saigon on 19 April are largest since initial Binh Xuyen clash with National Army three weeks ago.
 - A. Ten Vietnamese soldiers wounded at Army HQ by gunfire from nearby Binh Xuyen strongpoint.
 - B. Later, hand grenades and machine-gunfire directed by passing truck at Majestic Hotel (Saigon's finest), injuring one Frenchman.

25X1C

[REDACTED] say French troops will restore order if European quarter threatened.

- I. French now have responsibility for this sector but heightened emergency would give them excuse to clamp down tighter on city as a whole.
- D. Anti-French sentiment apparently rising.
 - I. Local French UP correspondent, who has consistently filed distorted, anti-government copy, reportedly beaten up by Saigon police (now under Diem's control).

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E1.

- A. US official notes French Army captain apparently on full-time assignment in Binh Xuyen HQ.

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25X1C B. Colonel Savani,

25X1C [REDACTED] is occupying obviously influential position
in Binh Xuyen HQ.

C. In same connection Premier Diem has reported to Ely
that the French have demanded that certain Vietnamese
fortifications in the city be dismantled, but have
ignored establishment of Binh Xuyen stronghold half
a mile away.

III. Meanwhile, Diem making no progress toward formation stable
government.

A. Planning Minister (and premiership hopeful) Thoai
has joined list of many cabinet ministers who have
submitted resignations.

1. Since mid-March, 12 of a total 21 ministers
have tendered resignations.
2. Several of these were ministers in name only.
3. Aside from the sect representatives, only one
minister (Minh -- Defense) has been definitely
dropped from the cabinet.

B. Diem concedes inability to attract "worthy" Vietnamese
to his government.

1. He feels this goal unattainable until sects
made to acknowledge government's supreme
authority.

C. Current plan -- formation of some sort of national
assembly to be foundation of definitive, authoritative
government.

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1. French oppose this course; want immediate "basic reorganization."
2. French goal undefined, but various proposals suggest it would involve dilution of nationalist government by addition of Francophile opportunists on whom they can rely.

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